



# PEO Highlights

*Prepared for the Annual General Meeting of Engineers Geoscientists Manitoba, October 15, 2020*

On behalf of the Council of Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO), I would like to extend our best wishes on your 2020 AGM and congratulate you on another year regulating the engineering and geoscience professions in Manitoba. I look forward to hearing about your accomplishments, as well as meeting new president, Jason Mann, P.Geo., and Council, at your virtual meeting.

Canada's engineering and geoscientists regulators share a commitment to protecting the public interest by regulating the practice of professional engineering and governing licence holders in our respective provinces. We also share the challenge of navigating our regulatory role in the face of rapidly evolving technologies, emerging disciplines of practice, increased scrutiny and increasing public expectations for regulators.

I believe together, we can meet these challenges by sharing best practices and maintaining open communications with each other as regulators across the country. And I look forward to working closely with Mr. Mann at Engineers Canada Presidents' Group meetings.

I would also like to take this opportunity to update you on what PEO has been up to over the past year:

## **New president and governing Council introduced at PEO's 98th Annual General Meeting**

At PEO's own virtual AGM, held on May 30, 2020, I was installed as the regulator's 101st president and eighth woman to lead its Council. We also introduced our new Council for the 2020-2021 term. Today's eight women and 17 men on Council govern PEO's 91,500 licence and certificate holders, and regulate professional engineering in Ontario to serve and protect the public interest. The new leadership group includes province-wide representation from a wide array of sectors, including the public, business, academe and government, as well as a diversity of gender, race and ethnic identities.

## **National Professional Practice Examination**

At its March meeting, Council decided to adopt the NPPE as a replacement for the PEO-administered PPE. Joining this national program provides PEO with an objective, psychometrically valid and digital professional practice examination. During the pandemic, the NPPE is being offered as a remotely-proctored examination, and the first sittings of this new exam occurred in June for those whose March PPE sitting was cancelled. Online registration for future sittings has been available since July.

## **COVID-19 response**

On March 18, PEO closed its office and staff transitioned to working remotely until further notice. Because so many of PEO's licensing processes have been paper-based, requiring applicants to physically provide materials supporting their applications, PEO staff had to find solutions and pivot to new ways of working. Over the past several months, PEO staff developed solutions enabling PEO to continue to carry out its mandate. A few of these solutions include:

- Updates to the P.Eng. application form and modified processes so that applications can be submitted by email.
- New processes to permit the electronic distribution of more than 200 seals in a digital format to new licence holders.
- Revised processes that allowed for more than 400 applications to advance electronically to the experience assessment stage. Since the shutdown, 150 academic assessment results, as well as 20 Experience Requirements Committee interview outcomes, were communicated by email.
- And for certificate of authorization (C of A) applications and renewals, PEO has transitioned to a new process for receiving and approving new applications, while renewals are now online via the portal with holders able to manage their accounts online.



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Further to our successful efforts to keep the licensing processes moving, PEO has continued its other regulatory roles running, including:

- Maintaining its complaints and enforcement processes, allowing the public to continue to submit complaints about licence holders and concerns about illegal practice to the regulator via email; and
- Issuing a COVID-19 practice advisory notice advising licence holders on their obligations and responsibilities during the pandemic.

As of October, PEO staff continue working remotely. However, planning has begun for staff's eventual return to headquarters. Experts have been engaged to provide guidance in implementing a gradual, phased-in approach to help ensure the health and safety of our staff, volunteers and visitors.

### **External Regulatory Performance Review and Action Plan**

Work continues on the action plan to address the 15 recommendations from the external regulatory performance review undertaken last year to identify any gaps between PEO's current practices and Right-touch Regulation - the process, procedures and policies exhibited by the best regulators. At its November 2019 meeting, Council approved an Activity Filter that was developed by staff in response to the review. The filter classifies committee, subcommittee, chapter and working group activities and outputs as "regulatory" (that is, including "core regulatory" and "regulatory policy"), related to board governance or neither. The next step in the process is to evaluate activities that have been classified and determine how best to perform them and measure their outputs. The action plan serves as a component of an overall strategy that also includes implementing the structural changes to PEO's operational organization required to produce the capacity and agility needed to achieve the objectives. The external review and action plan are both available on PEO's website: [www.peo.on.ca](http://www.peo.on.ca).

### **Governance**

Last September, Governance Solutions Inc. (GSI) was engaged to provide independent expertise to assist Council and the president with developing and maintaining sound governance and leadership practices of giving direction and setting controls. After observing a few meetings, GSI presented a roadmap of how Council can examine and improve its governance. At its March meeting, Council voted to accept the governance roadmap in principle and directed the executive committee to steward it over the coming two years. GSI was subsequently retained to guide the executive committee and Council, and councillors have established monthly Strategic Conversation sessions to openly and informally discuss recommended changes so that everyone is brought along in the conversation of change. The governance work will help Council clarify roles and responsibilities; improve policies; enhance the outcomes from committees and structures; review effective board composition and competencies; and clarify and maximize the role of PEO chapters who are embedded throughout Ontario communities.

For further information on all PEO activities and initiatives, visit: [www.peo.on.ca](http://www.peo.on.ca).

Again, I wish you the best on your 2020 virtual AGM.

Sincerely,

Marisa Sterling, P.Eng., FEC  
President and Chair, Professional Engineers Ontario